

ASSEMBLY, No. 4024

STATE OF NEW JERSEY 220th LEGISLATURE

INTRODUCED MAY 16, 2022

Sponsored by:

Assemblyman EDWARD H. THOMSON

District 30 (Monmouth and Ocean)

Assemblyman SEAN T. KEAN

District 30 (Monmouth and Ocean)

SYNOPSIS

Establishes two-year pilot program for certain mental health care facilities to treat additional juvenile patients.

CURRENT VERSION OF TEXT

As introduced.



(Sponsorship Updated As Of: 6/29/2022)

1 AN ACT concerning mental health care facilities.

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3 **BE IT ENACTED** by the Senate and General Assembly of the State
4 of New Jersey:

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6 1. a. As used in this act:

7 “Adult” means an individual aged 18 years or older.

8 “Health care facility” means a health care facility, licensed by
9 the Department of Human Services, or by the Department of Health
10 pursuant to P.L.1971, c.136 (C.26:2H-1 et seq.), to provide
11 inpatient mental health care treatment and services to adult mental
12 health patients.

13 “Juvenile” means an individual between the ages of 14 and 17.

14 “Involuntary psychiatric beds” means licensed psychiatric beds
15 located in a designated and separate unit of a general, psychiatric,
16 or special hospital established for the provision of treatment
17 services for individuals who are: experiencing an acute episode of
18 a psychiatric disorder, referred by a designated psychiatric
19 screening center, and admitted voluntarily or involuntarily upon a
20 determination that such individuals pose a danger to themselves or
21 to others.

22 “Voluntary psychiatric beds” means licensed psychiatric beds
23 located in a designated and separate unit of a general, psychiatric,
24 or special hospital established for the provision of intensive
25 evaluation, stabilization, and treatment of adults who are admitted
26 voluntarily and experiencing an acute episode of a primary
27 psychiatric disorder.

28 b. Within 90 days following the effective date of this act, the
29 Departments of Health and Human Services shall jointly establish a
30 two-year pilot program. The Departments of Health and Human
31 Services shall select between two and four health care facilities to
32 participate in the pilot program. To be eligible to participate in the
33 pilot program, a health care facility shall:

34 (1) employ at least one licensed psychiatrist who specializes in
35 child or juvenile psychiatry, or at least one licensed psychiatrist
36 with documented specialized training, supervised clinical
37 experience, and demonstrated competence, as it pertains to
38 providing psychiatric care to juveniles;

39 (2) employ nurses who are trained to treat juveniles at all times
40 within the health care facility;

41 (3) employ treatment programs that are appropriate to the age of
42 a juvenile; and

43 (4) be licensed to treat mental health patients in both
44 involuntary psychiatric beds and voluntary psychiatric beds.

45 c. For the duration of the pilot program, a health care facility
46 participating in the pilot program shall be permitted to:

1 (1) place juvenile mental health patients in vacant beds that are
2 otherwise reserved for adult mental health patients, whenever
3 feasible and clinically appropriate; and

4 (2) place adult mental health patients, who are legally
5 committed to psychiatric inpatient care, in voluntary psychiatric
6 beds, whenever feasible and clinically appropriate.

7 d. The Departments of Health and Human Services shall study
8 the performance of the health care facilities participating in the pilot
9 program and assess the quality of treatment provided to adult and
10 juvenile mental health patients. Within 90 days following the
11 conclusion of the pilot program, the Departments of Health and
12 Human Services shall jointly prepare and submit a report containing
13 all relevant findings to the Governor and, pursuant to section 2 of
14 P.L.1991, c.164 (C.52:14-19.1), to the Legislature.

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16 2. This act shall take effect immediately and shall expire upon
17 the submission of the report required pursuant to subsection c. of
18 section 1 of this act.

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STATEMENT

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23 This bill establishes a two-year pilot program for certain mental
24 health care facilities to treat additional juvenile patients.

25 Under the bill, "health care facility" means a health care facility,
26 licensed by the Department of Human Services or by the
27 Department of Health to provide inpatient mental health care
28 treatment and services to adult mental health patients.

29 Within 90 days following the bill's effective date, the
30 Departments of Health and Human Services (departments) are to
31 jointly establish a two-year pilot program. The departments are to
32 select between two and four health care facilities to participate in
33 the pilot program.

34 To be eligible to participate in the pilot program, a health care
35 facility is to: (1) employ at least one licensed psychiatrist who
36 specializes in child or juvenile psychiatry, or at least one licensed
37 psychiatrist with documented specialized training, supervised
38 clinical experience, and demonstrated competence, as it pertains to
39 providing psychiatric care to juveniles; (2) employ nurses who are
40 trained to treat juveniles at all times within the health care facility;
41 (3) employ treatment programs that are appropriate to the age of a
42 juvenile; and (4) be licensed to treat mental health patients in both
43 involuntary psychiatric beds and voluntary psychiatric beds, as
44 those terms are defined in the bill.

45 For the duration of the pilot program, a health care facility
46 participating in the pilot program is to be permitted to: (1) place
47 juvenile mental health patients in vacant beds that are otherwise
48 reserved for adult mental health patients, whenever feasible and

1 clinically appropriate; and (2) place adult mental health patients,
2 who are legally committed to psychiatric inpatient care, in
3 voluntary psychiatric beds, whenever feasible and clinically
4 appropriate.

5 The bill provides that the departments are to study the
6 performance of the health care facilities participating in the pilot
7 program and assess the quality of treatment provided to adult and
8 juvenile mental health patients. Within 90 days following the
9 conclusion of the pilot program, the departments are to prepare and
10 jointly submit a report containing all relevant findings to the
11 Governor and Legislature.

12 The mental health of young people in New Jersey is a growing
13 area of concern. There is currently a greater demand for inpatient
14 mental health treatment and services for juvenile patients than there
15 are available beds. Some health care providers currently have
16 vacant adult mental health treatment beds, which by law cannot be
17 used to treat juvenile patients. It is the intent of the sponsor to
18 study whether these facilities can effectively treat juvenile mental
19 health patients using vacant adult treatment beds, thereby helping
20 additional patients receive the care and treatment they need and
21 maximizing the use of mental health treatment resources in New
22 Jersey.